

Economic Framework for Evaluating Complete Streets

Key findings:

- Measures of economic activity have changed with implementation of complete streets, but available literature does not support unambiguous statements like, “If complete streets are built, the net economic effects will be x.”
- Complete street can be an important part of a public investment policy that can change the distribution of economic activity within a region, but difficult to separate out the unique effects of complete streets on investment
- Consumption patterns could be impacted as a result of complete streets by a change in the total number of consumers, the cost of goods to consumers, and a change in land values as a result of complete streets.
- Complete streets could be correlated with increased property values, in the event that complete streets increase amenity and travel by non-auto modes, and do not penalize through auto trips and the ability to park too much.
- Could improve fiscal health due to increase sales tax, but there is no way to tell that other factors aren’t responsible for the increase in tax revenue.
- Complete streets may increase the up-front implementation costs since they may be above and beyond existing project design improvements. In cases where complete street design elements replace larger automotive infrastructure requires, the cost may remain constant or decrease.
- Complete streets can reduce the number of collisions. Reducing the number of deaths and injuries has tangible economic benefits.
- Complete streets could contribute to healthier people. The economic benefits of that improved health could be measured as longer life expectancy, improved productivity and reduced costs for health care.

Economic Framework for Evaluating Complete Streets

Categories of Economic Activity	Direct and Non-Direct Transportation Impacts	Effect on Economic Activity			
		Possibly Negative	Possibly None	Possibly Positive	Possibly Very Positive
Business Activity	Access ¹			●	●
Business Activity	Trip Volume		●	●	
Business Activity/ Investment	Trips Duration ²	●	●	●	
Fiscal Impact	Construction ³	●	●	●	●
Fiscal Impact	Maintenance		●	●	
Property Values/ Investment	Amenities		●	●	
Economic Growth	Health ⁴			●	●

Notes:

¹ New facilities for non-automobiles are likely to have a larger positive impact on economic activity than improving existing facilities.

² An increase in trip duration for automobiles may negatively impact economic activity, while a reduction in trip duration for non-automobiles may result in a positive impact on economic activity.

³ Construction of new facilities may have significant economic impacts, while adding new elements may have no to little economic impacts.

⁴ If complete streets contribute to healthier people by encouraging regular physical activity, Complete Streets could positively impact the economic activity by longer life expectancy, improved productivity and reduced costs for health care. Economic impacts of improved safety such as a reduction in the fatal and injury collisions is measurable.